

Vaping, defined as inhaling and exhaling a heated aerosol produced by an e-cigarette or an electronic delivery system, is increasing globally. (1) Vaping liquid usually contains nicotine and comes in a variety of flavours. It is used as an adjunct treatment in smoking cessation with variable efficacy. (2, 3) Vaping by never smokers appears to be increasing. (4) with a study showing around 25% of young Australian women who had ever vaped were never smokers. (5) While vaping without nicotine has potential for harm (6), only vaping with nicotine is being considered in relation to medical eligibility for contraception.

Legal situation in Australia

Vaping with nicotine-free e-liquids is legal. Some states do not allow sales to those aged under 18 years and restrict places where vaping is permitted. Individuals can import nicotine, provided they have a prescription, using the TGA Personal Importation Scheme.

Cigarette smoking and medical risks

Cigarette smoking is associated with an increase in the risk of conditions that are also increased by oestrogen-containing contraception. These include breast cancer, ischaemic heart disease, stroke and other arterial vascular disease; smoking is also a weak risk factor for venous thromboembolism. Smoking increases the risk of and mortality from breast cancer. (7) (8)

Medical effects of nicotine vaping

Although the harms of electronic nicotine delivery systems are considered lower than smoking in the general population, (9) there are no long term studies in users of hormonal contraception. The small amount of data available suggests cardiovascular events are rare among e-cigarette users and that heart rate and blood pressure are less effected by e-cigarettes than by cigarettes. (10) There is no evidence on the risk of venous thromboembolism and cancer associated with e-cigarettes. The CDC, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), state and local health departments, and other clinical and public health partners are currently investigating a multistate outbreak of lung injury associated with e-cigarette product use. (11) The significance of this outbreak in relation to hormonal contraceptive use is unknown.

Recommendations

Until further evidence is available, vaping with nicotine is considered equivalent to cigarette smoking in relation to the medical eligibility criteria (MEC) for contraceptive use. As it is not possible to determine equivalency of exposure between vaping and smoking, any vaping in those aged 35 years and older will be MEC 4 (i.e. absolutely contraindicated) for use of combined hormonal contraception.

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New South Wales
Family Planning NSW
fpnsw.org.au



Victoria
Family Planning Victoria
fpv.org.au



Tasmania
Family Planning Tasmania
fpt.asn.au

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